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ABSTRACT

In the Albion Writing Project at the State University of New York at Brockport, teachers, students, administrators, and college consultants collaborated on improving writing and writing instruction from kindergarten through grade 6. Throughout the two-year project, teachers attended inservice workshops on such general topics as the composing process, varieties of writing, revision, evaluation, and creating a curriculum with a scope and sequence. The instructional team developed a model for an effective, process-based writing program and described student and teacher interaction in that program. This description suggested that (1) like other successful writers, children follow the stages of the composing process to produce finished, valued pieces; (2) they interact effectively with peers, learning to listen, analyze, describe, support arguments, assist other children in their uses of oral and written language, and profit from the feedback given by their peers; (3) with the assistance of knowledgeable teachers, they have no difficulty writing poetry, exposition, and persuasive compositions; and (4) contrary to those who mistrust any sequential program for writing as being too restrictive, students can, in fact, profit from a scope and sequence for writing. (HTH)

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Children Writing through the Composing Process:

What Kids and Teachers Can Do Together

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Children Writing through the Composing Process:

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Jennifer, a kindergartner, sits by her teacher Marilyn Raymond and tells her what is to be written down on each page of Jennifer's storybook, "The Spring Book." Jennifer's book has four pages of prose, printed by Mrs. Raymond, to accompany four crayon drawings by Jennifer. They are pictures of wild geese, returning to "nest" in great flocks near her school before migrating to Canada to their summer homes, a tree bursting with new leaves, her grandparents' vacation home in Florida, and budding flowers, which she informs us are tulips, growing around her house. Jennifer prints her name as author, "by Jennifer" and officially closes her creative effort by declaring on the inside back cover of pink construction paper, "The end."

Brian, a third grader with "special educational needs," along with the rest of his classmates, works with his teacher Linda Spierdowis, on creating and expanding a sentence describing an imaginary bird. Before they write first drafts of their sentences, Brian and the other students read silently and orally a story about an imaginary bird, they discuss the bird with each other in small groups and with their teacher, they dramatize in small groups the story of the bird, with the lights turned off and their eyes closed, they "see" their own imaginary birds, they describe their birds in small groups, and then draw pictures of their make believe birds. Only now, after this

extensive prewriting, does Mrs. Spierdowis write on the chalk board the beginning of the sentence, "I saw a bird . . . ." and asks Brian and the others to finish the sentence on scrap paper. Brian reads his draft sentence to another pupil, who relates his to Brian, while the other students pair up to follow suit. After Mrs. Spierdowis has shown the whole class flash cards of descriptive words, Brian and the others set to revising their sentences. Brian rewrites his sentence, concentrating on combining sentences and on using descriptive words. He then reads aloud his revised sentence to another pupil and then to the whole group of students, who offer suggestions for improvements. Mrs. Spierdowis reads Brian's sentence out loud and asks Brian questions about his sentence. Brian rewrites his sentence, taking into account comments by the other students and by his teacher, and then in his best handwriting copies his sentence onto the picture he has drawn. Brian's revised sentence goes like this: "I saw a big bird looking at me when I was up in a tree."

Brian's descriptive sentence, especially for a third-grade pupil with "special educational needs" is a considerable success. We know, for instance, that the average length of T-units (Kellogg W. Hunt's term for an independent clause with all its modifiers) for fourth graders is 8.6 words in length (Hunt, 1965). Brian, then, who's a third grader and one with "special educational needs," working with his teacher and classmates through the composing process, creates a T-unit of <u>fifteen</u> words in length, almost <u>double</u> the number of words fourth graders normally write, and even more words than the average length of T-units created by twelfth graders, 14.4 words per T-unit.

Brian's sentence, furthermore, is a highly complicated one, with an embedded adjective "big bird," a participial phrase "looking at me," and a subordinate adverbial clause with a prepositional phrase "when I was up in a tree." Altogether an impressive achievement.

During Betty Sugg's fourth grade "writer's workshop" time Raymond, along with his classmates, explains the costume of a person from a certain period in American history. Raymond and the other boys and girls first talk about dress styles for certain occupations in bygone times in America, discussing why particular styles were used, what fabrics and materials were employed, and what accessories were added to the basic dress. Raymond chooses the topic of a frontier man's garb, reading about the time in an encyclopedia in his room, drawing a picture of his man and coloring it in, and then making a collage of his figure with burlap for the "buckskin or deerskin" clothing and for his "coon skin hat," with a dark brown wool material for the "fringe across his chest" and on his coonskin hat, and with a "deeper brown color" velvet for his "moccasins." Then Raymond lists on scrap paper the parts of his figure's outfit, arranges the elements from head to toe as they appear on the model, writes down appropriate adjectives under the name of each article of clothing, and writes out a rough draft explanatory essay about his figure. Raymond and a partner read their essays to each other, pointing out apt descriptive words, suggesting ways to combine sentences, and checking for spelling errors. On the basis of their workshopping, Raymond and the others rewrite their explanations, meeting one at a time with Mrs. Sugg to talk about the variety and correctness of sentences. After his

conference, Raymond further revises his explanation, copies over the final draft on lined composition paper, and pastes the model of his frontier man--backed by rose colored construction paper--and his written description on halves of a 12 x 18" piece of black construction paper. Raymond shares his effort with the whole class, as do the other members, and then the descriptions and collages are hung up in the hallway outside their classroom for the whole school to enjoy.

In Sue de Palma's sixth grade science class, David and his classmates write an explanatory process essay on "how something works," in this case, "the life cycle of the sea." David and his classmates read "Microscopic Plants of the Sea" and "archys song" from Level 15 of the reading series, Riders on the Earth. In small groups, Brian and his classmates talk about the life cycle as it is presented in both the essay and in the poem and how each part of the cycle affects the other. To show his understanding of the concept of "life cycle," David draws his initial version of the idea on scrap paper, meets with a partner to make sure he has included all necessary parts, re-draws his illustration on "good" paper, colors it, and labels the parts of the cycle. In his drawing, David shows a "little puny fishey" munching on a microscopic plant (a pencil dot shows us the "microscopic" plant), progressively larger fishey's gobbling up each other, until the largest fish is caught from a boat and transformed into "tuna fish," the part of the tuna fish not eaten being turned into fertilizer which is eventually washed by rain into the sea to feed the new microscopic plants. Voilá! The life cycle of the sea, according to Brian! Working from his illustration, David writes out an explanation of the process of the life cycle on scrap paper. Mrs. de Palma suggests

to the class that beginning each sentence in the explanatory essay with the word "then" can be repetitious and asks students, working in small groups, to come up with words which could replace the word "then." One student lists the brainstormed words on the chalkboard. David revises his explanation, checking for the overly repetitious use of any word and shares his revised essay with another student, looking for repeated words and errors in spelling and punctuation. Mrs. de Palma and David read over his explanatory essay for mistakes in mechanics. David now writes out a final draft of his process essay on "good" paper in ink and in cursive writing, following conventions of generous margins, a heading, and a title, making sure his final copy is clear and free of erasures. He then staples his essay to his picture and submits it to Mrs. de Palma. She has the illustrated process explanatory essays created by the students put up on bulletin boards for the pleasure of all students and guests of the class.

What Kids and Teachers Can Do

This is what teachers and children--working together--can create when they follow a program for writing with the composing process as its focus. Contrary to misconceptions held by many, children can do things teachers and researchers have thought them incapable of performing. First, contrary to what the skeptics believe, children of all ages--kindergarten through sixth grade--can operate with the composing process as the foundation for all they do. Like other successful writers, they follow through the stages of the composing

process to produce finished, valued pieces. At each stage of the process, except the drafting stage, kids interact with other people, in pairs, in small groups, and even in whole classes. And they do this effectively, talking about matters related to prewriting, composing, revising, and editing. As they work with each other, they learn how to listen, analyze, describe, support arguments, and learn how to assist other children in their uses of oral and written language and to profit from the feedback given by their friends and colleagues. Furthermore, in spite of the widespread belief that young children are able to write description and narration only, kids, with the assistance of knowledgeable teachers, have no trouble writing poetry, exposition--including process how-to essays--and persuasive compositions. Finally, kids, contrary to those who mistrust any sequential program for writing as being too restrictive, can profit from a scope and sequence for writing, kindergarten through the sixth grade, which is founded on the composing process and on a belief that kids and teachers need to work together in order to talk and write well.

Focus on Three Kinds of Research

The accounts of the children and their teachers following the composing process to produce finished pieces of writing come from a two-year curriculum undertaking. The Albion Writing Project for students and teachers in grades K-12. More detailed descriptions of the complete project and the curriculum developed, with its scope and sequence, appear elsewhere (Blake and Tuttle, 1979a, 1979b, 1979c), but for the purposes of this paper I should like to concentrate on what kids and teachers did in the elementary grades. In contrast to

what we did with the Albion Writing Project, I should like to review selected studies of children writing, which concentrated, in turn, on the kids writing by themselves, on kids writing in testing situations, and on teachers teaching writing, without the knowledge of what others going before had found out to be true about the nature of writing and the special problems inherent in teaching writing. Although the investigators who threw their research spotlights on these different areas gained valuable insights, their research would have been far more useful for elementary kids and teachers if they had, on the basis of what was already known about writing and teaching writing, dealt with kids and teachers, not as they learned and taught by themselves, but as they interacted with each other through the composing process.

One group of researchers, led by Donald Graves, reported on what kids write by themselves, without any systematic, direct instruction from teachers. Unhappy with previous research on children writing, mostly experimental studies of what kids produced as a result of short-term teaching methods, Graves decided to study kids as they wrote naturally, much like a field biologist observing a rarely studied species in its natural habitat. In his initial study, the basis for his doctoral dissertation, Graves used a case study approach to observe several kids in second grade classrooms from a middle class community over a five month period (1975). Essentially, Graves visited several second grade classrooms virtually every day for five months. As soon as his pre-selected children began to do anything related to writing, he sat down by them and observed in detail what they did. On the basis of his observation, he reported that the children followed a composing

process, the stages of which he termed prewriting, composing, and postwriting; that most of the children used some sort of drawing, painting, or coloring in the prewriting stage; and that the children appeared to fall into one of two categories, the reactive writer--who was less well organized in his writing, and the reflective writer--who was more structured in his writing.

In a later study, sponsored by the National Institute of Education, Graves and others continued their observations of children writing in a natural school setting (1981). The title of his study, "How and in What Order Children Develop as Writers," reflects Graves' continuing emphasis on how children write, not on how teachers teach composition. Because of this emphasis, Graves and his team of researchers insisted during the study they were in the classroom chiefly to observe what children did as they composed in writing, not to conduct workshops on teaching writing for the classroom teachers. They answered only questions from the participating teachers which dealt with their children as they moved through the composing process, and he and his research staff reiterated that the researchers were not there to present a writing program but were in the classrooms solely to observe what children did and note how they changed as writers during the observation period. Although the classroom teachers in the study eventually demanded an in-service course in writing, engaged an outside consultant, and took formal courses in writing, their focus, as directed by Graves, was on the children writing. The conclusion was not surprisingly inconsistent with Graves' original intent: "teachers are able to focus far more on what children can do" (1981, p. 116).

While some researchers, then, have concentrated on what children are able to write without teacher intervention, others have reported on the nature of children's writing in testing situations. One such person is Charles R. Chew, Chief of the New York State Bureau of English and Reading Education. As he developed a writing competency test for fifth grade students in New York state, Chew gathered samples of children's writing in testing situations in order to find out precisely what young children were able to write. From an examination of 150 third grade papers written by children from a small New York city school with students from multi-ethnic backgrounds, Chew found that young children could write a surprising amount of words on a topic, they could handle conventions of written language (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and word choice) in a fairly sophisticated manner, and they were able to use relatively complicated sentence structures like appositives, introductory subordinate clauses, and coordinate elements with conjunctions other than the word "and" (1980).

In examining other papers written by children, grades second through fifth, in a "near testlike situation," Chew was heartened to find that the children wrote more words and better papers than he and others had expected (1983). Second graders, for instance, had no trouble assuming a particular writer's role, generated many words on a single topic, and exhibited a surprising command of mechanics, using capital letters at the beginning of sentences and end punctuation correctly and spelling quite well. Fourth and fifth graders continued

with the skills previously developed in lower grades and were able to develop relationships among characters, tell a story, and organize explanatory essays with appropriate generalizations and supporting details.

Although we should be impressed by what the children were able to write, we nevertheless should note particularly that these children wrote in a testing situation: we are studying here not how they composed but what they wrote. We are examining not process but product. Even though the children wrote beyond the usual expectations, we must wonder how much better their writing would have been if they had followed a composing process. The children, for instance, were asked to write in a specified time on one of these topics: "1. I like spring because . . . 2. The things I want to do this summer . . . 3. If I were a monkey (or any other animal), I would . . . 4. The things that I like best about my class this year . . . 5. The best field trip that we took this year . . . 6. (Any topic of your choice)." In a testing situation, children have little time to use prewriting strategies for generating material for a rich first draft. Nor do they have time to revise and edit their compositions, following the techniques which all experienced writers use to polish and refine their final drafts.

While some researchers have observed children writing and others have analyzed children's writing from testing situations, some have scrutinized what elementary school teachers do as they teach writing. A study conducted by A. D. Van Nostrand and others serves to illustrate

this emphasis (1979). For one school year Van Nostrand and a team of fifteen observers watched teachers teach writing in eight elementary classrooms, grades three through six. The researchers' purpose was to observe and to describe; they provided no writing program and gave no instruction in teaching writing. What the observers found was this: as teachers presented a writing activity, they generally moved through these stages: 1. presenting information 2. giving instruction 3. orienting 4. reviewing 5. writing 6. rewriting 7. sharing writing 8. evaluating and 9. editing. As a result of the year-long observation, Van Nostrand concluded that writing instruction is recursive, that is, the elements of writing activities do not necessarily follow in a strictly sequential fashion; some elements may be repeated, according to the demands of the situation. Found Van Nostrand, "the instructional process [in a writing activity] is recursive, like the structured loop in a computer program. Such recursion results from a continuous interaction between teacher and student. There is a compelling reason for writing instruction to be characterized by such a high level of interaction between students and teachers. The instructional effort is recursive because the process of writing is recursive" (Van Nostrand, vii). What Van Nostrand found--that children and teachers need to work together through the composing process if they are to create effective pieces of writing--is an absolutely basic piece of information for teachers of writing on any level, but it seems surprising that he couldn't learn this fact from any number of sources, including reports from professional writers about how they create in writing.

Children Writing: What Kids and Teachers Can Do Working Together

We should not be surprised that kids write fluently by themselves, that they produce many words in a testing situation, and that elementary school teachers, working by themselves, can get kids to write better than some of us had expected. But can't children write more effectively and possibly even more elegantly when they enjoy direct instruction in writing, when their teachers, interacting with other teachers and researchers, provide them with a writing program with a clearly delineated scope and sequence based upon a model of the composing process? As a partial answer to this question, I should like to outline the main features of the Albion Writing Project, a curriculum program in which these features were present.

How We Worked Together. The Albion Writing Project was a joint effort, involving classroom teachers, elementary school pupils, administrators, and college consultants who set out to work cooperatively for the improvement of writing and teaching writing, grades K-6. All those involved met several times initially in planning sessions, arriving at consensus about these three major elements of the curriculum project. First, we agreed there were powerful assumptions that should form the basis of our actions, such as "Writing is a complex intellectual skill which nevertheless can be taught," and "Everyone, unless he or she is mentally retarded or psychologically damaged, can learn how to write more effectively." Second, we agreed there were to be a series of inservice meetings throughout the school year, coupled with classroom activities, jointly developed by teachers and consultants, dealing with

topics and activities such as these: INSERVICE TOPIC: Workshopping--during prewriting (invention) and after successive drafts; how to "talk about" (assess) the elements of successful writing coupled with Classroom Activities: Setting up classroom situations in which children and teachers learn to interact with each other through all stages (except drafting) of the composing process. And third, we all agreed that an intimate understanding of the composing process was the basis of the project, that, indeed, "composing was the curriculum."

What We Did Together. During the first year, instructional supervisors, grades K-6, and the consultants met every other week for two-hour sessions; during the second year, since it was a small school district, all the elementary school teachers and consultants met bi-monthly for two-hour sessions to discuss topics about writing, to create lessons dealing with the various types of writing--revising these lessons based upon the feedback from students and teachers--to develop a preliminary draft of writing competencies, grades K-6, and to continually monitor the progress and features of the project. We pursued these general topics in workshop sessions throughout the two years: 1. The Composing Process 2. Varieties of Writing 3. Skills of Revising 4. Conventions and Mechanics of Writing 5. Grammar and Sentence Combining 6. Workshopping ("Talking to Writers") 7. Assessing and Evaluating 8. Developing Competencies in Writing 9. Creating and Revising Writing Activities (following the Instructional Composing Process (ICP) format and 10. Creating a Writing Curriculum with a Scope and Sequence.

What We Learned. There were many indirect and serendipitous results of the two-year project. Teachers who didn't know each other became friends after working in meetings and discussing matters of writing, teaching, and learning. Kids in one fifth grade class wanted to know whether they could have more "writing workshop" periods. Other kids wrote concrete, haiku, and free verse and had their poems displayed on the walls of the school corridors for Fine Arts Day. Principals visited classes to observe writing lessons. Teachers explained the writing program to groups of parents. Teachers were invited to other schools and state and national conventions to explain the writing program. Teachers wrote articles about the project which were published in a school district newsletter and in the local newspaper. Most importantly, though, teachers, kids and administrators found they could work cooperatively to solve a complex instructional problem, in this case, improving writing and writing instruction, that indeed such cooperation was far more fertile than if the kids or teachers tried in isolation to improve the situation. Not only did teachers find they needed to interact with others as members of an instructional team, but they needed to have a "knowledge base," to be aware of the recent research on writing, and to adapt such information to their immediate classroom situations. Otherwise, they eventually realized they were doomed to reinvent the wheel of writing instruction, to waste a great deal of time learning inductively but wastefully what their forerunners had already discovered and reported. Finally, although we predicted that young children could follow through the

composing process, we were continually surprised by how naturally and enthusiastically they took to working with each other throughout the stages of composing.

On a more formal level, the instructional team developed a model for an effective writing program, grades K-6, which was the result of discussion, reading, classroom trials, feedback, revision, and continual assessment. As the result of their work with the program, it produced the following description by explaining how kids and teachers would behave in an effective writing program.

How Children and Teachers Behave in a Successful Writing Program

1. Kids regularly write whole compositions, rather than do extensive grammar drill on workbook exercises, on topics they discover, with the help of others, and about which they feel strongly to real audiences, including their classmates and teachers. Teachers themselves regularly write, sometimes on the topics given to their students, other times on subjects of their own choice, but the fact remains they write constantly. If they neglect their own writing, they have no understanding of how to teach writing or of the special problems beginning writers encounter.

2. Kids create all kinds of writing, including description, narration, exposition, persuasion, and poetry. Teachers also write varied kinds of discourse to find out the special problems associated with particular kinds of writing.

3. Kids spend much time in class with prewriting strategies like these: drawing, painting, listing, brainstorming, remembering and writing down what they remember, outlining, contrasting, reading and

taking notes, freewriting, role playing, and playing with sentence structures. Teachers set up activities in the classroom with children to gather a richness of material from which to write.

4. Kids practice arriving at a focus--a word, phrase, or statement--of what the main idea of a certain piece is--and at a simple structure--beginning, middle, and ending--for a specific piece. Teachers help students in arriving at a focus, thesis, or "lead"--as newspaper writers call it--and in drafting a simple preliminary outline for their planned pieces.

5. After extensive prewriting, kids plunge into first drafts with a minimum of frustration, confident that they can revise and edit the initial draft at a later stage. Teachers establish a supportive classroom atmosphere, encouraging their pupils to trust their instincts to write first drafts straight through.

6. Kids regularly revise first draft papers by doing things like these: changing openings and endings, adding details, showing not telling, cutting out words and phrases, combining sentences, using precise words, and using transitional devices. Teachers devise classroom activities for teaching children how to revise.

7. Kids consistently edit their revised compositions by proofreading and correcting mistakes in mechanics like spelling, punctuation, capitalization, standard usage, and conventional manuscrupt format. Teachers encourage students to proofread in class their own and each others' revised compositions.

8. Kids do common exercises dealing with problems with mechanics, in matters of standard usage or spelling or individually do exercises as needed. Teachers identify problems students have in writing mechanics and assign class exercises for common problems or have individuals do exercises as needed.

9. Kids regularly interact with each other and with the teacher at all but the first draft stage of writing to receive immediate feedback from various audiences on how their writing is perceived. Teachers set up classroom situations with pairs of students, small groups of from four to five students and with the whole class so students can read their papers and get immediate feedback. They teach children how to interact in groups and guide them in asking questions aimed at improving their writing.

10. Kids continually act as "trusted readers" for their classmates, encouraging each other in writing and suggesting ways for improving their writing. Teachers create a classroom climate in which each student, as well as the teacher, assumes the role of "trusted reader."

11. Kids frequently bring their writings to final form by publishing them in school newspapers, literary magazines, or in dittoed booklets produced in class. Teachers provide opportunities for students to publish their finished writings.

12. Kids read professional and student models of the same kind of writing they are producing to see how "other writers" solve the problems they are confronting. Teachers have children read or listen to and analyze various professional and student writing models, not as literary critics, but as writers reading other writers' works.

13. Kids learn to expect to have their writing "assessed" at every stage. They look forward to having their fellow students and teachers give them immediate feedback on how to improve their writing drafts. They don't anticipate their peers and teachers reacting to their drafts by only detecting errors. Teachers, along with children in writing workshops, "assess" student writing at every stage, not by marking mechanical errors in red, but by giving feedback on how to improve the writing.

14. Kids consider it reasonable to be graded on their finished compositions--not on successive drafts--and expect to be given grades for improvement over a considerable period of time. Teachers do not grade drafts of compositions. They may grade final, finished pieces and they do give grades for writing improvement over a marking period.

15. Kids may produce writing which has not been assigned and expect their classmates and teacher to read and respond to it. Teachers create a classroom environment in which effective writing is valued and students frequently write independently of the teacher.

The Necessity for Kids and Teachers to Interact through the Composing Process

What can kids and teachers do as they write together, guided by what other kids, teachers, and researchers had previously learned, that they couldn't do acting separately? Much more, it seems apparent, than we had ever dreamed. Even while they isolated the child, writing alone, the child writing for a test, or the teacher instructing by herself, at the end of their studies, the authors I have cited urged

future researchers to study the interaction in a writing program among kids, teachers, and a sequential program based upon the composing process. It is unfortunate they didn't start their work with such a notion. At the end of an article, "A New Look at Research on Writing," Donald Gaves, whose primary emphasis in elementary writing research has been on the child writing, cautions: "Perhaps the focus of research in the eighties ought to slow down, look at the full context of writing, and get to know the real potential of both children and teachers" (1981, 116). Charles Chew, who reported what kids could do in testing situations, asks this rhetorical question: "The question has to emerge as to how much more quantity and quality could be produced if there were concentrated instruction and practice." What would happen, in other words, if teachers, benefiting from a writing program with the composing process as its foundation, actually taught children in a rational, systematic way how to write better? In another article, Chew describes in detail how a teacher in a "normal" school classroom, "uninspired by a researcher," is able to encourage a group of first graders to write well and with enthusiasm. According to Chew, "The teacher of this first grade emphasizes the process of composing. She spends much time on prewriting. She holds discussions with the class as a whole, in small groups, and on an individual basis. Students are given options. She attempts to develop the observation skills of the children through all their senses . . . . The rewriting and editing phase is not neglected in this classroom . . . . Each student has a check sheet to use with his or her own piece and with the buddy's piece" (1983, 82).

Whether or not the teacher has been influenced by inservice workshops, periodical literature, her own reading, or has developed this procedure entirely on her own, her success is a direct result of using the composing process with the children. Van Nostrand, at the conclusion of his study of how elementary school teachers teach writing, tells us: "And the complexity of the instruction teaching of writing that is misunderstood lies in the responsive nature of the teacher's interaction with the individual students at their tasks" (1979, 163). Van Nostrand found that, for elementary school writing instruction to be successful, teachers needed to work with kids and with other professionals through the composing process. Maybe if Van Nostrand had utilized previous studies on the intimate relation between the composing process and writing he would have recognized this verity, not at the end of his study, but at the beginning. Van Nostrand continues: "any research that can link a scope and sequence to the teacher's tactical situation can help a teacher to formulate the needs of individual students into clusters of lessons or groups of instructional units" (1979, 163). What is needed, he tells us, is a scope and sequence of practical writing activities to provide direction for the teacher when she deals with the children in her classes. We should have no trouble agreeing to that.

We might examine one last source to substantiate the need for a program with a scope and sequence, a series of logically related and classroom-tested writing activities for kids and teachers in elementary grades, based upon the composing process. In their report on "Writing

Achievement 1969-79: Results from the Third National Writing Assessment," the authors of the summary pamphlet comment on the instruction, or lack of writing instruction, the 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds reported receiving. The 9-year-olds, we can assume, were not asked for their views on their writing instruction, but we may be able to infer that what was true for sixth and seventh graders and eleventh and twelfth graders was also substantially true for third- and fourth-graders as well. Concluded the report: "Finally, it is clear from the background questions that neither 13-year-olds nor 17-year-olds receive a great deal of direct instruction in writing or are required to do much writing in school. Very few appear to have access to a writing program that includes prewriting instruction, oral and written feedback on writing assignments, encouragement to write several drafts of papers and opportunities to rework papers after they have been reviewed by teachers" (1982).

We are now more than ready to put into practice writing programs with teachers and kids working together that actually teach kids how to write well.

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